

PANCHA. Rosali, you're so skinny in comparison to all of us.

ROSALI. No I'm not. Here, look at my fat hips. *(ROSALI pulls down her pants and shows them her hips.)*

ESTELA. That's nothing. ¡Mira! *(ESTELA pulls down her pants and shows ROSALI her hips.)*

CARMEN *(to ROSALI)*. At least you have a waist! *(CARMEN pulls down her skirt and shows ROSALI her stomach.)*

PANCHA. ¡Uuuu! That's nothing, Doña Carmen! *(PANCHA raises her skirt and shows them her stomach.)*

ROSALI. But you don't understand. I've got all these stretch marks on my arms...*(ROSALI opens her blouse and shows them the stretch marks close to her breasts.)*

ESTELA. They're small. I have stretch marks that run from my hips to my knees. *(ESTELA takes off her pants to show them.)*

CARMEN. Stretch marks?! Stretch marks!! You want to see stretch marks? *(CARMEN lifts her blouse and exposes her stretch marks and scars.)* Stretch marks!!! *(ANA sits back as she watches the WOMEN slowly undressing. They continue to compare body parts ad libbing. Finally they are all in their underwear and they stop to notice CARMEN's stretch marks.)*

ANA. Amá, what's that scar you have on your stomach?

CARMEN. This one? That was Estela.

ANA. It's such a big scar.

CARMEN. Estela was a big baby.

ESTELA. I gave you the most trouble, didn't I?

CARMEN. A-ha. But that's okay. I've heard Elizabeth Potaylor has one just like it.

PANCHA *(suddenly realizing)*. Look how we are? What if somebody came in and saw us like this?

CARMEN *(fanning her breasts)*. Pero que bien se siente. It feels so good to be rid of these clothes and let it all hang out.

ANA. Pues sí. Nobody is watching us. Who cares how we look.

ESTELA. So this is how we look without clothes?

CARMEN. Just as fat and beautiful...*(They all hug in a semi-circle laughing triumphantly.)*

ANA. We can finally relax.

ESTELA. We're not finished yet.

ROSALI. Estela, all we need are 14 dresses.

PANCHA. Those we can finish tomorrow for sure.

CARMEN. So what are we going to do to celebrate?

ESTELA. To celebrate what? Finishing on time for the first time?

PANCHA. No. All of us, most of us, finally being legal.

CARMEN. It's true. And once you get the card you can do anything you want. Tengo fe...Estela, I've been thinking...

You know what we could do? We could copy the patterns for these dresses, make the dresses ourselves, and have a fashion show. Maybe we could model them ourselves. *(The WOMEN laugh at the thought.)*

ANA. No, that's a great idea! Why don't we make them in larger sizes too?

PANCHA. Está loquita, but sometimes she makes sense. We could probably sell more if we made them in larger sizes.

ROSALI. You know what we could also do? Jaime could sell them in the flea market. If they sell, little by little we could grow...

ESTELA *(jumping in)*. And from there, if we make a lot of money, more money than what we're making now, maybe we can rent a place downtown on Broadway and start a boutique!!

ANA. But we'll need a name.

ROSALI. Well, why not just Estela Garcia?

ANA. I was thinking of something more French.

CARMEN. No. A French name would make it sound chafas.

No, Estela Garcia sounds fine.

PANCHA. Estela, maybe you could go to school and study fashion design and design our dresses.

ESTELA. Yeah. I could do that. *(They all stop to imagine the possibilities.)*

CARMEN. So what are we doing to celebrate?

ESTELA. First let's finish, then we can talk about celebrating. *(They go back to work. CARMEN takes off her glasses as she fans her face.)*

CARMEN. Que calor. I'll be glad when all of this is over.

ANA. Estela, can we please open the door?

PANCHA. Open the door? ¿Pa qué? So people that pass by can see us like this?

ROSALI. But it's so hot!

ANA. I don't think they're coming. Besides we're almost finished. *(The WOMEN look to ESTELA for a decision.)*

ESTELA. Okay...Amá, open the door. *(CARMEN goes to open the door. She turns back to ESTELA as if to make sure. CARMEN opens the door and fans herself with it. Beat. CARMEN holds the door wide open and walks outside. The WOMEN can't believe their eyes. A few seconds later CARMEN runs back in screaming.)*

CARMEN. Estela! It's out there! ¡La Migra! They're coming!! *(CARMEN shuts the door. All the WOMEN immediately get dressed.)*

ESTELA. No! It's not fair! We were almost finished!! *(The WOMEN dig into their purses for their cards. ESTELA can only cry in desperation. She cannot find her clothes and*

*has to head for the door in her slip. ROSALI and ANA peek through the curtains and quickly make a realization.)*

ROSALI. Doña Carmen, that's not la migra!

ANA. It's the police!

CARMEN. The police? *(She peeks through the curtain.)*  
¿Cómo?!

ANA. That's the guy I thought was a spy. He's an undercover cop!

ROSALI. Like in the movies.

ANA. It's a drug bust!

ESTELA. Where?

ROSALI. I think it's el Tormento's house. *(ESTELA moves for the door.)*

ANA. ¡Sí, el Tormento! They're taking him away. *(ESTELA and ANA jump up in excitement.)*

CARMEN. That's what he deserves! *(The police are heard driving away.)*

PANCHA. That's good they're taking him away in the van.  
¡Bola de viejos cochinos! *(The WOMEN laugh together. Then ANA stops laughing.)*

ANA. Amá, was that the same van you saw Monday?

CARMEN *(nodding her head hesitantly)*. I think so.

ANA. On Tuesday?

CARMEN. I think so.

ANA. On Wednesday?

CARMEN *(sheepishly)*. Pos sí. *(She puts on her glasses.)*

ANA. Amá, that wasn't la migra. Everyone knows the vans are green!

CARMEN. I didn't.

ESTELA. How could you not know?

CARMEN. Pos no se; all those years of being undocumented  
I always imagined they were black.

PANCHA & ROSALI. Ayy, Doña Carmen!!!

CARMEN. Phueehhh! Tanto pedo y para nada.

ESTELA. Thank God! ¡Que susto!

CARMEN. It's time to retire! *(They laugh in relief then they become silent.)*

ANA. Well, it's over...for now. *(Beat.)*

ESTELA. If you want to take the rest of the day off...We'll finish tomorrow.

PANCHA. We can go?

ESTELA. Yes. I know how tired you must be. Go ahead. I'll stay and continue working.

ROSALI. I can't wait to go home and take a shower.

CARMEN. Si, porfavor, bañate...Tomorrow, I'm going to make a fresh batch of mole.

PANCHA *(scared for her life)*. Doña Carmen, why don't you make some rice? *(ANA, PANCHA, and ROSALI immediately run out.)*

CARMEN *(muttering to them)*. Ingrates! *(To ESTELA.)* Are you sure you won't need us anymore?

ESTELA. No. Now go! Before I change my mind. Don't you want to go outside? *(They gather their bags and quickly leave. ESTELA is left alone. Lights fade a little. She turns on the radio to a mellow jazz station. She goes around doing a final clean up, turning off lights and machines. She stops, recalling the five of them in their underwear, fantasizing about their own boutique. She grins to herself. She whispers.)* Large sizes? *(ESTELA shakes her head, dismissing the idea, but then stops and runs to a pile of stocked material. She eagerly searches and finds a roll of red fabric. ESTELA excitedly runs to a station and begins taking her measurements. As the lights slowly fade, we see ESTELA measuring herself with pride and pleasure, half laughing to herself, half defiantly...about to design and make her first dress. Lights slowly fade to black.)*

## SCENE FOUR

AT RISE: *Lights come on. There are no more dresses on the racks. It is Friday, on the clock it is 2:25 p.m. ANA and PANCHA are busy blowing up balloons. ROSALI is cleaning up. There is a birthday cake with a large candle of the number "25." A large sign reads: "Happy Birthday Estela." Footsteps are heard outside. ANA runs to turn off the electricity, the WOMEN hide... The door opens.*

WOMEN. Surprise!!!! *(ROSALI takes a picture. CARMEN stands motionless holding a pot.)*

ANA. Amá, we thought you were...

ROSALI. Doña Carmen, what's wrong?

CARMEN. I just got back from the doctor.

PANCHA. What did she tell you?

ANA. ¿Amá?

CARMEN. She says I'm not pregnant.

ANA. Then why are you sad?

CARMEN. She says, "it's only menopause." When you reach menopause it's over. You're no longer a woman. Se te seca allí abajo.

ANA. Amá, you are a real woman.

CARMEN. What I should be is a grandmother by now, but the way you and Estela are going, I won't be one for a long time...¿Y Estela?

ROSALI. She hasn't returned from delivering the dresses. She should be coming soon.

CARMEN. Here. *(Gives ROSALI the pot.)* I made rice.

*(They hear footsteps outside. ANA turns off the lights. The door opens.)*

WOMEN. Surprise!!! (*ROSALI takes another picture. Lights come on. ESTELA stands shocked in her new dress.*)

ESTELA. You remembered?

ROSALI (*gives ESTELA a gift*). Happy twenty-fifth birthday, you old maid!

CARMEN (*referring to her dress*). Estela, did you make it? *Que bonita te ves*, very nice. You see you're not ugly, you just didn't know how to dress.

ESTELA (*hugs ROSALI*). I brought a gift for all of you. (*ESTELA goes outside and brings in a large fan.*)

PANCHACHA. Now the boss treats us pretty good.

ESTELA. Because now I have money.

CARMEN. Did Mrs. Glitz finally pay you?

ESTELA. Yes, she paid me, but she kept threatening me... I've written out all the checks. (*ESTELA pulls out the checks from her bag. She distributes them, the first check going to PANCHACHA.*)

PANCHACHA (*looking at her check*). This is the biggest check I've ever gotten. (*ESTELA gives ROSALI her check.*)

ROSALI. Too bad I've already spent it on the Americana Express.

CARMEN. ¡Válgame! I didn't realize how much money you owed me.

ANA (*looks at her check, disappointed*). Estela, come here. (*ANA and ESTELA talk among themselves.*) Estela, how come I only get this much?

ESTELA. I took out for taxes.

ANA. Taxes? But you're not reporting...

CARMEN. How much do you have left?

ESTELA. About six hundred. I'll send the lawyer some more money today. Maybe they won't take me to court.

PANCHACHA. But if they deport you and take everything, we won't be able to work towards the boutique.

ROSALI. We're also going to have to look for another job. (*The WOMEN stare at the floor.*)

ANA. Back to McDonald's. (*Beat.*)

PANCHACHA. Estela, I know my husband isn't going to like it, but here. (*PANCHACHA extends her check to ESTELA.*) Take it. Pay me back when you can.

ESTELA. Pancha, are you sure?

PANCHACHA. No, pero, take it before I change my mind.

ESTELA. Muchas gracias...(*They try hugging, but they find it difficult, it's awkward. To herself.*) Let's see. How much more do I need? (*CARMEN stares at her check for a few more seconds and slowly says good-bye to it.*)

CARMEN. Ten, ten. Take mine too. What kind of mother would I be if I didn't give it back?

ESTELA (*hugs CARMEN*). ¡Que buena es!

CARMEN. You see, ¿No que no te quiero? It's because I love you that I make your life so miserable.

ESTELA. Don't love me so much. (*ROSALI thinks about it too.*)

ROSALI. I guess the Americana Express can wait...Here is my check too. (*ESTELA hugs ROSALI. Now they all look to ANA. ANA holds her check tightly.*)

ANA. No, not me...I'm going to buy a typewriter...I can't. (*The WOMEN don't say anything, but continue staring at ANA.*) I really need this typewriter. I have this essay I have to type up for a contest...All right...Take half of it. (*ESTELA semi-hugs ANA.*)

ESTELA. Excuse me for just a minute. I have to make a phone call. (*ESTELA picks up the phone and dials.*) Hello...May I speak to Mrs. Glitz? This is Estela Garcia. I'm just calling to thank you for keeping your word and finally paying us today. I also wanted to tell you that you are a mean, wicked, bitter, unsympathetic, greedy, rude, awful...

ANA. Capitalist!

ESTELA. Capitalist!...No! We quit...Yeah, well I'll see you in hell. *(The WOMEN are shocked, incredulous of her actions.)*

CARMEN. ¡Maldita! What have you done?

PANCHA. You got us fired, didn't you?

ESTELA. No, we quit. *(ESTELA laughs excitedly.)*...Don't worry about the work. I got us a contract with Señor Vasquez!

EVERYONE. Señor Vasquez!!!

CARMEN. How did you convince him?

ESTELA. I just told him that we are the most hardworking women he could ever ask for. I know, I lied, but I got it.

EVERYONE. ¡Ayy! *(All the WOMEN embrace excitedly. ROSALI brings out the birthday cake. They sing "Happy Birthday" not realizing that ROSALI is holding the cake backwards and it reads 52 instead of 25. They stop half-way through and turn it.)*

ESTELA. Fifty two?! *(They continue singing.)*

ROSALI. Ana, light up the candle so I can take a picture... *(ANA lights up the candle.)* Okay, Estela, blow out the candle. *(ESTELA stops to make a wish then blows it out. ROSALI takes a picture of her.)*

ANA. What did you wish for?

ESTELA. Maybe when you get back from New York you'll see. *(ANA and PANCHA give their gift to ESTELA.)*

ROSALI. Ana, here, take a picture of us to remember this week...*(ROSALI gives ANA the camera. The WOMEN gather for the photo.)*

ANA. Okay! Ready?...One...two...three! *(The WOMEN suddenly hold up their "Temporary Residence Cards.")*

WOMEN. Green!!! *(The WOMEN freeze in a pool of light. ANA steps out and turns to the audience. The WOMEN exit backstage. Spotlight on ANA.)*

ANA. I always took their work for granted, to be simple and unimportant. I was not proud to be working there at the beginning. I was only glad to know that because I was educated, I wasn't going to end up like them. I was going to be better than them. And I wanted to show them how much smarter and liberated I was. I was going to teach them about the women's liberation movement, about sexual liberation and all the things a so-called educated American woman knows. But in their subtle ways they taught me about resistance. About a battle no one was fighting for them except themselves. About the loneliness of being women in a country that looks down on us for being mothers and submissive wives. With their work that seems simple and unimportant, they are fighting...Perhaps the greatest thing I learned from them is that women are powerful, especially when working together...As for me, well, I settled for a secondhand typewriter and I wrote an essay on my experience and I was awarded a fellowship. So I went to New York and was a starving writer for some time before I went to New York University. When I came back the plans for making the boutique were no longer a dream, but a reality. *(ANA picks up a beautiful designer jacket and puts it on.)* Because I now wear original designs from Estela Garcia's boutique, "Real Women Have Curves."

*(The lights come on and all the WOMEN enter the door wearing new evening gowns and accessories designed by ESTELA. The WOMEN parade down the theater aisles voguing in a fashion-show style. They take their bows, continue voguing, and slowly exit. Lights slowly fade out.)*

THE END